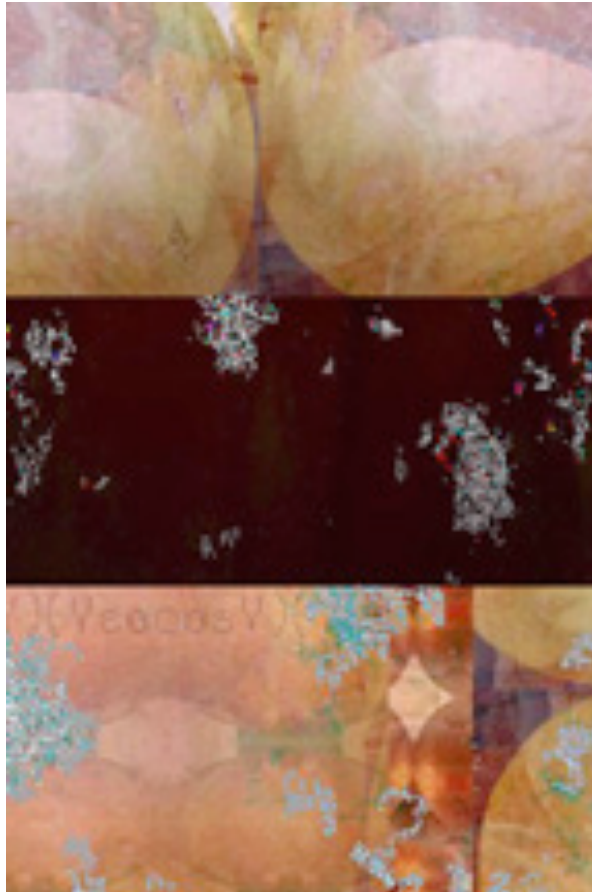


2005 Pierluigi Casolari interview of Joseph Nechvatal on his computer virus project published in Italian on the net at monitorweb (defunct) as *i maestri della virus-art*



Joseph Nechvatal, *les fleurs du mal* (2003) 44 x 66" computer-robotic assisted acrylic on canvas

Pierluigi Casolari: Usually people consider virus as threat. But you use them as artistic tool. When did you get this idea?

Joseph Nechvatal: In 1991. From 1991-1993 I worked as artist-in-resident at the Louis Pasteur Atelier and the Saline Royale/Ledoux Foundation's Apple computer lab in Arbois, France. Arbois was the hometown of Louis Pasteur and the idea of my *Computer Virus Project 1.0* ~ where I began experimenting with computer viruses as a creative stratagem ~ began then and there.

The AIDS virus plague was impacting on me at the time, so it made emotional sense to move in that direction. I wanted to overcome the fear I was feeling ~ and it

expressed my attraction towards things *beauté tragique*. I think that the life/non-life idea inherent in the viral situation is fascinating.

The text *The Electronic Revolution* by William S. Burroughs was also key to the idea. In it he theorizes that the written word was literally a virus that made spoken word possible.

Pierluigi Casolari: You work with new media technology but there is something in your painting that resemble traditional art, as symbolistic and abstract painting. Which are your favorite artists of the past, but also of the present, too?

Joseph Nechvatal: My favorite visual artists of the past are numerous. At the top of this list would be the artists who worked in the Grotte de Lascaux, Ambrogio Giotto, Mathias Grunewald, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, Henri Michaux, Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, Antonin Artaud's drawings, Hans Bellmer, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol.

Some living artist I like very much are Carolee Schneemann, Michael Rees, Louise Bourgeois, Suzanne Anker, Knowbotic Research, Yayoi Kusama, Matthias Groebel, Steve Miller, Nino Longobardi, Frank Gillette.....oh the list goes on and on.

Pierluigi Casolari: Often the names you give to your artworks mean something erotic, sensuality, etc. But don't you think that new media are too much cold and impersonal for these topics?

Joseph Nechvatal: No. Duchamp and Picabia showed the way. A curious alliance: the cold impersonality of technology with the heat of ecstasy.

Pierluigi Casolari: Beside contemporary art, have you some hobby in your life?

Joseph Nechvatal: Yes, I love electronic music very much and I collect avant-garde music. Also reading and writing I view as a passionate activity. And travel excites and rewards me.

Pierluigi Casolari: Often contemporary artist draw inspiration not only from other artist but from writers, filmmaker, advertising copywriters too. Are there some movies or books particularly influential on your work?

Joseph Nechvatal: Certainly. Tops have been Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus* and Georges Bataille's book *Visions of Excess*. But I love reading anything by or on Georges Bataille, Gilles Deleuze, Friedrich Nietzsche, Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, and Jean Genet.

For lighter reading I enjoy Kathy Acker, Patrick McGrath, Gary Indiana ~ among others. I don't like to go to the movies much anymore, although I do enjoy watching old Betty Davis films on cable TV. The internet is so much more interesting to me than the movie business, now.

Pierluigi Casolari: What is the topic of your next exhibition?

Joseph Nechvatal: I am working with the idea of the viractual virus and the pansexual.

Pierluigi Casolari: What is the relationship between your work and your private life?

Joseph Nechvatal: If I told you then it would no longer be private. Let me just say that there are strong relationships ~ but they must remain secret and deeply personal to function for me. Excuse my secrecy.



monitor web
di Pierluigi Cascani

i maestri della virus-art



Joseph Nechvatal

Le sue opere saranno esposte al festival Norapolis (www.norapolis.org). Per vederle su Internet clicca: www.nechvatal.net.

Sono l'incubo di tutti: eppure c'è chi usa proprio i virus dei pc per deformare le immagini. E trasformarle in opere d'arte.

Sarà uno dei divi di Norapolis, il festival francese della multimedialità che dal 15 al 19 aprile si terrà a Metz. Joseph Nechvatal, di Chicago, è infatti diventato uno dei maestri della nuova virus-art: ovvero l'arte di usare i virus della realtà virtuale per creare immagini deformate, uniche. Che sembrano pennellate di pittura astratta.

A quali maestri ti ispiri per le tue opere?

«Adoro Giotto, Bernini, Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, Andy Warhol... Guardo molto i pittori e i geni del passato».

Quali passioni hai oltre all'arte? «Collezione dischi d'epoca e seguo molto la musica

elettronica. E poi amo scrivere, viaggiare. Per lavoro mi muovo continuamente tra l'Europa e gli Stati Uniti: mi piace!».

Ma tra tutto, alla fine, cosa ti ispira di più?

«Sono incerto se rispondere i vecchi film. Oppure navigare su Internet: nell'universo del web si trovano storie stupende, sorprese davvero incredibili».

I tuoi dipinti spesso hanno nomi che parlano di erotismo, bellezza e metamorfosi. Immagino che ci sia qualche rapporto con la tua vita reale... «Certo, ammetto che c'è un legame fortissimo. Ma preferisco lasciarlo molto sottinteso».

Nei panni del computer



Mauro Ceolin, milanese, realizza videogiochi come fossero dipinti, pieni di citazioni pop. La sua ultima opera? Si chiama *Rgbvirusart*: è la storia di un pc che cerca di evitare una serie di cattivissimi virus. Il giocatore, ovviamente, si cala nei panni del computer.

Il gioco-opera di Mauro Ceolin (www.rgbproject.com).

Attenti a questo codice



Il loro nome assomiglia a un codice: 010010111010101.org. Chi sono? Un collettivo artistico che opera su Internet. La loro specialità è inventare virus (innocui) che, anziché danneggiare il pc, creano forme artistiche.

Un pc-opera per la virus-art (www.010010111010101.org).